

# Participation Counts!

**Objective:** To create a poster/flyer encouraging others to participate in the census.

## Additional Materials Needed:

Art supplies and/or access to computers for making the poster/flyer

## Background Information:

- After the 1990 census, the Census Bureau estimated that a modest but significant percentage of the population did not participate. The participation was lower among minority populations. Some people did not participate because they were afraid; some did not understand what the census was; some did not care; and some did not recognize that they were required to respond.
- Not participating in the census affects those who don't participate, as well as their communities. If someone is not counted in Census 2000, we all lose.
- When segments of the population do not participate, it can have an adverse effect on various government decisions. Inaccuracies in the count can alter or halt projects and cause misallocations in the distribution of local funds and services. Some of these services are designed for the very people who have been missed in the past.

## Getting Started:

Share with students that during the 1990 census a small percentage of the population was not counted. Ask them why they think people did not fill out and return their census forms. Explain that an undercount — the number of people omitted from the census total — can result in a community not receiving all the government funds that it needs and deserves. Ask students what they think the benefits of filling

## Extension Activity

Suggest that students work in pairs or teams to display their posters/flyers in their communities. Stress that they cannot post a flyer or poster without first getting permission.

Possible locations include bulletin boards at local community centers, schools, libraries, and stores.

out the form are. Make a list on the board and be sure to include the following benefits of census data:

- the distribution of more than \$185 billion in federal funds, and even more in state funds;
- planning for public transportation services, hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, and the location of other health services;
- attracting businesses to state and local areas; and
- developing adult education programs as well as directing services to children and adults with limited proficiency in English.

## Student Activity:

1. Explain to students that they will design a poster/flyer to inform others about the importance of completing and returning the census form. Students may choose to work alone or in pairs.
2. As a class, review students' Census 2000 Booklets, noting important concepts while deciding what information from the activity worksheets could be used on the poster/flyer. Highlight important concepts by listing them on the board.
3. Assist students with creating their posters/flyers.

## Summary:

Moderate a class discussion about how students can play the role of "census ambassadors" in their community — sharing what they've learned about the census. Talk about how the poster/flyer can be shared with family, friends, and/or the community to increase census awareness and participation in their homes and neighborhoods.